

Old Town San Diego State Historic Park



Our Mission

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



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P. O. Box 942896

Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

For information call: (800) 777-0369

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**Old Town San Diego
State Historic Park
4002 Wallace Street
San Diego, Ca 92110
(619)220-5422**

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*Today's Plaza
remains the heart
of Old Town.*

*Discover the lives of
those who came before
to better understand
how California
came to be.*



Old Town San Diego State

Historic Park pays tribute to the cultural influences that make California special. Restored and reconstructed buildings in central San Diego are now museums, shops and restaurants that capture the energy of Old Town between 1821 and 1872. The central plaza is lined with



Old Town San Diego, 1846

buildings—some dating back to the 1820s—that offer a glimpse of the lifestyles of both ordinary residents and the most wealthy and influential.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Native Americans

The Kumeyaay lived near the San Diego River for thousands of years before the mission and presidio were built. Today a sandy native landscape marks the former borders of the river that supplied the native people with many of life's necessities. At



California Rancho Scene, Alfred Scully, 1848

first the Kumeyaay were friendly with the settlers, but this changed when their traditions and beliefs came into conflict. Diseases introduced by the settlers decimated entire villages, and the native culture nearly disappeared.

Spanish Settlement

In 1769 Spanish colonization of Alta California began in San Diego with construction of the royal Presidio and the first in a chain of 21 California missions. Directed by the padres, mission Indians cultivated crops, manufactured blankets and clothing, provided construction labor, and raised livestock. Although Spain severely restricted trade, the padres exchanged otter skins, cowhides and tallow for manufactured goods and luxury items from the United States, Europe and China.

The Mexican Period

Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821, but it was 1822 before a new military command arrived in San Diego. At this time the small settlement consisted of the nearby presidio housing a military garrison, the mission six miles inland with its labor force of Kumeyaay Indians, and the port, where ships stopped to trade for supplies.

Spanish soldiers began building residences below Presidio Hill in the early 1820s. Sun-dried adobe brick was the traditional building material, since wood was scarce. Soon five houses belonging to the Carrillo (and later Fitch), Ruiz, Ybañes, Serrano and Marron families became the nucleus of the community. By 1825 the adobes formed a rough but orderly street pattern around an open plaza. Two of the finest structures, begun in 1827 and still standing, belonged to José Antonio Estudillo and his brother-in-law, Juan Bandini.



Making corn flour, Alexander F. Harmer, (circa 1895)



Machado y Stewart Garden

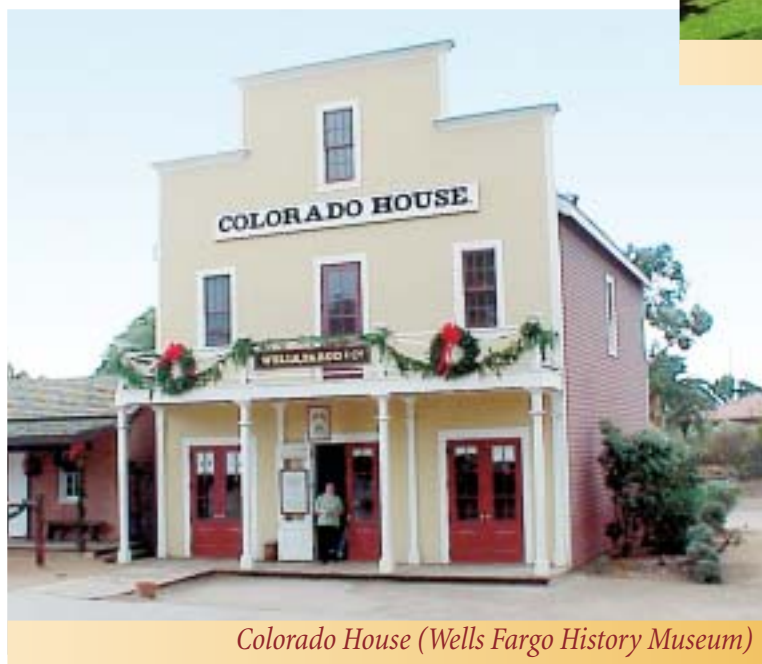
Americans and other foreigners often enjoyed the customs and festivities of San Diego. The open plaza hosted fiestas, bullfights, games of chance, and amusements that offered the opportunity for wagering.



*Commodore
Robert F. Stockton*

The American Period

San Diego's Mexican era ended abruptly in 1846, when the United States declared war on Mexico. Initially there was little resistance to American occupation, but the situation eventually turned San Diego families against one another. Some remained loyal to Mexico, while others supported the



Colorado House (Wells Fargo History Museum)

United States. The town was occupied and won back several times—one major battle took place in nearby San Pasqual Valley. In 1846 U.S. Navy Commodore Robert F. Stockton permanently captured San Diego. The war between Mexico and the United States ended in 1848 with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, establishing a new boundary between the two countries.



Mason Street School

James Marshall's gold discovery at Coloma in January 1848 lured adventurers from around the world. San Diego became an important stopover for miners en route to the gold fields, and immigrants crowded into available housing. Adobes were remodeled, and new structures were built. In 1851 prefabricated wood-frame buildings, brought



McCoy House

by ship around the Horn, were assembled in San Diego.

Following the Mexican War, California experienced a major political transformation—a new Constitution written in 1849 and statehood in 1850. San Diego was incorporated as a city, and new American law was codified.

By 1856, with the decline of the military presence and the Gold Rush land boom, the town turned into a small, insular community. In the U.S. census of 1860, only seven individuals identified themselves as merchants. Fire was a constant threat, and in the 1860s one misfortune after another struck. The storms of 1861-62 brought high tides and flooding. In May 1862 a severe earthquake was followed by a smallpox epidemic. Several years of drought devastated the ranchos and the cattle industry in Southern California.

In 1867 San Franciscan Alonzo Horton arrived in San Diego to begin building nearby New Town. In 1868 the *San Diego Union* began publication in what is now Old Town. The 1869 discovery of gold in Julian created a need for supplies, services and housing—a boon to San Diego's economy. From 1868 to 1874, Albert Seeley operated a stagecoach line between San Diego and Los Angeles. However, it was only a matter of time before New Town began to eclipse



La Casa de Estudillo

the old settlement. Government offices moved to the new community, taking along much of Old Town's economic base. Hope for Old Town's revitalization

died in the spring of 1872, when fire destroyed seven buildings, including the old courthouse.

Restoration

In 1907 sugar magnate John D. Spreckels purchased the remains of Casa de Estudillo and began the first efforts to revive Old Town. Public fascination with Helen Hunt Jackson's romantic novel, *Ramona*, led to restoration of the building advertised as "Ramona's Marriage Place." In 1908 more restoration began. These buildings helped renew interest in San Diego's Spanish and Mexican roots. Auto touring brought more

Guided walks explain Old Town's story, and living history interpreters give faces and voices to the people who shaped it.



Docents in period attire

visitors, and in the 1930s several buildings were built to enhance its appearance as a "Spanish Village." In 1968 Old Town San Diego became a State Historic Park, and the process of rediscovering and preserving the historic town began anew.





*Mexican-era dress
shoe for a man*


LIVING HISTORY

Make your visit memorable by entering into the spirit of Old Town San Diego. Enjoy its history, museums, period demonstrations, entertainment, programs and activities.

Guided walks reveal Old Town's story, and living history interpreters give faces and voices to the people who shaped it. Visit some of the oldest buildings and historic sites in California. Today's plaza remains the heart of Old Town. Discover the lives of those who came before to better understand how California came to be.



Old Town San Diego State Historic Park

to ,
San Diego
de Alcalá Mission
(6 miles)



Diegueño Indians drawn by artist with the 1849 U.S. Boundary Commission expedition

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Torrey Pines State Reserve and State Beach, one mile south of Del Mar (858) 755-2063
- Silver Strand State Beach, 4½ miles south of Coronado (619) 435-5184
- Border Field State Park (Tijuana Estuary), 15 miles south of San Diego (619) 575-3613
- San Pasqual Battlefield State Historic Park, 8 miles south of Escondido (760) 737-2201



The Cosmopolitan Hotel, as it appeared in the early 1870s


This park is supported in part through a nonprofit organization. For more information contact: Boosters of Old Town San Diego State Historic Park, 4002 Wallace Street, San Diego, Ca 92110-2743 (619) 293-0117 • www.ot-boot.com



Legend

- Freeway
- Streets
- Pedestrian Streets
- Rail Line
- Fence
- Adobe Wall
- 1821-1872 Historic or Reconstructed Buildings
- Other Building
- Accessible Feature
- Parking
- Restrooms



 Accessibility improvements are currently in progress throughout Old Town. Please contact the park facility or concession for the most current information. Call ahead, (619) 220-5422, to arrange accessible tours.



Concession Operated Buildings

- ① Bailey & McGuire Pottery
- ② San Diego House Coffee
- ③ U. S. House Soap & Apothecary
- ④ Racine & Laramie Tobacco
- ⑤ Wells Fargo History Museum
- ⑥ Cousin's Candy Store
- ⑦ Old Town General Store
- ⑧ Toby's Candles
- ⑨ El Centro Artesano
- ⑩ Captain Fitch's Mercantile
- ⑪ Gum Saan
- ⑫ Tinsmith
- ⑬ Miner's Gems
- ⑭ Toler Leather Depot
- ⑮ Theatre in Old Town
- ⑯ Casa de Bandini Restaurant
- ⑰ Johnson House
- ⑱ Shumup Ko Hup
- ⑲ Alvarado Provisions
- ⑳ El Fandango Restaurant
- ㉑ Bazaar del Mundo—
Stores & Restaurants
- ㉒ Rancho El Nopal Restaurant

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